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PUBLIC TELEVISION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS EDUCATION. PREPARED FOR THE TASK FORCE ON INNOVATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS EDUCATION.

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THE CARNEGIE COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION PROPOSAL FOR PUBLIC TELEVISION IS EXAMINED TO DETERMINE WHAT STEPS MIGHT BE TAKEN TO DEVELOP MOST FULLY ITS POTENTIAL FOR PUBLIC TELEVISION. IT IS ASSERTED THAT THE FRAMERS OF THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL HAVE NOT PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TELEVISION BROADCASTS AND THE INFORMAL CONTINUING EDUCATION OF ADULTS, AND THAT, AS IT RELATES TO OR ATTEMPTS TO USE BROADCASTS ORIGINATING WITH PUBLIC TELEVISION, PUBLIC AFFAIRS EDUCATION WOULD CONSIST OF SCATTERED, INDIVIDUAL, UNCOORDINATED RESPONSES WITH UNPREDICATABLE DEGREES OF EFFECTIVENESS. ACCORDINGLY, PERTINENT ISSUES IN THE COORDINATION OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES ARE EXPLORED--AREAS OF OVERLAP BETWEEN PUBLIC AFFAIRS EDUCATIONAL AND PUBLIC TELEVISION, THE INCORPORATION OF TELECASTS INTO THE PROCESS OF INFORMAL CONTINUING EDUCATION, MEANS OF LINKING THE ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES OF PUBLIC TELEVISION, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AND NONPROFIT AGENCIES ENGAGED IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS EDUCATION, THE PROBLEM OF MEASURING AND ADEQUATELY SERVING SPECIFIC AUDIENCES, THE USE OF LONG RANGE ISSUES AND TOPICS OF CONCERN IN CURRICULUM PLANNING, AND THE BALANCING OF NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL NEEDS AND INTERESTS. (LY)

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Prepared for the
Task Force on Innovation
in Public Affairs Education
by Eugene I. Johnson

PUBLIC TELEVISION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS EDUCATION

A Corporation for Public Television may appear on the American scene in the near future. Bills to establish such a Corporation have now passed both Houses of Congress and have been referred to a joint Conference Committee. Swift Presidential approval is expected when both Houses have acted on the Conference report.

The concept of a Corporation for Public Television originated with the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, established in 1965, following a conference on the financial needs of educational television held in Washington, D.C., in December 1964. While the measure currently before Congress differs in some respects from the Carnegie Report and does not incorporate all its recommendations, the Report is certain to influence the thinking of those who guide the destinies of educational television and radio in this country for a long time to come. The pages of the Carnegie Report bristle, either directly or indirectly, with challenges to the broadcasting industry, to education, to public administration - indeed, to every sector of American life. It is, therefore, appropriate for the Task Force on Innovation in Public Affairs Education to examine the proposal in order to determine what steps might be taken to develop most fully its great potential for public affairs education.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Basically, the plan for Public Television rests on the conviction that some new pattern developed for and tailored to the realities of U. S. life is necessary to serve the needs and interests of the American people not adequately served by either commercial television or educational television as it is currently organized. The Corporation for Public Television would subsidize production centers and arrange for the distribution and interchange of high quality television broadcasts designed to serve a wide range of special groups. Distribution would be through the educational television stations of the nation, but the Corporation would neither control these stations nor be controlled by them. Each individual station would bear the final responsibility for choosing the programs to be offered viewers in its area.

The challenge to public affairs education that this system poses has not been stated directly; it is implicit in the very nature of the arrangement. [Public Television will include a sizable bloc of programs in the public affairs field and these will be produced with little or no direct attention to the place they have or should have in a comprehensive program of public affairs education that goes beyond television broadcasts. That is, the framers of the proposal for Public Television have not conceptualized - or even really recognized - the relationship between television broadcasts and the informal continuing education of adults. It is likely, therefore, that public affairs education, as it relates to or attempts to use public affairs broadcasts originating with Public Television, will consist of scattered, individual, uncoordinated responses with unpredictable degrees of effectiveness.]

The Carnegie Commission proposes to create a powerful, effective mechanism for changing the pattern of broadcasting in the United States today. To date, educational groups, apart from those involved in "instructional television," have not created or even conceived an equally powerful mechanism for drawing on Public Television as well as other sources of materials and services, in developing an effective pattern for public affairs education. Hence, it seems likely - unless the educational agencies move - that Public Television will determine the character and scope of public affairs education in the United States. From the standpoint of the educational agencies, this would seem to be a case of the tail wagging the dog.

This paper considers some of the major issues involved in relating effectively the public affairs educational activity of many different educational institutions and organizations to Public Television. The paper concentrates on six major issues and also offers some suggestions on how the nation might move to make maximum use of Public Television offerings in expanding and strengthening public affairs education everywhere throughout the country.

It should be emphasized that the proposed Corporation for Public Television would not be a monolithic giant working to eliminate regional and local differences in the United States or to blot out differences in the taste and interests of various elements of the American people. The Corporation, as conceived, would have precisely the opposite effect. It will provide a mechanism for nourishing these differences and ensuring that the

catholicity of taste and interest of the American people is adequately served at the national, regional, and local levels. The Task Force on Innovation, in seeking ways to expand and strengthen public affairs education in the United States, presumably shares those purposes. Certainly its members have voiced objections to any attempt to impose either a dreary monotony or a gray official view on the consideration of vital questions of public policy. It is hoped that the Task Force will seek ways and means to turn the spotlight of disciplined inquiry and study systematically on all issues of public policy nationally and again in each state and community of the country.

In applauding the bold vision that conceived Public Television, it seems imperative to call for an equally bold attempt to infuse public affairs education programs with new resources, the capacity for greater outreach and a means for working together to serve the growing needs of the American people for understanding the complex issues that confront modern society.

THE ISSUES

There is no intention of seeking to infringe on the rights and responsibilities of those agencies and stations currently producing public affairs broadcasts or on any new production efforts that may be established to serve Public Television. The concern of this paper is with the relationship of all those educational forces involved in public affairs education and the many different nerve centers that Public Tele-

vision will create. An examination of that relationship suggests that public affairs education needs not only greater resources but an orderly system of resource allocation. The proposed Corporation for Public Television, for example, will provide such a system for the non-commercial broadcasting field. An "orderly system" refers chiefly to an organized and continuing way of supporting public affairs education throughout the nation with such central services as access to good public affairs broadcasts, additional funds, a clearinghouse of materials and programs, and the means to work together in identifying major needs and responding to them. The issues selected for consideration in the following pages, therefore, are those that spring primarily from the need to have a structure of resource allocation for public affairs education that is capable of relating to other structures. The six issues selected are:

1. How and where does Public Television fit into public affairs education? How do public affairs broadcasts differ on the one hand from Public Television and, on the other hand, from public affairs education?
2. Where do television broadcasts fit into the organization of informal learning experiences for adults in the area of public affairs?
3. What linkage - both conceptual and operational - is desirable among broadcasting stations, educational institutions and agencies, and agencies (national, regional, or local) interested in one or more areas of public affairs education? Who will shape the framework of perceptions, values, and relations

for a program of public affairs education? How will the sources of information and knowledge be identified and systematically tapped in developing educational activities? Who will select the content and control the point of view?

4. Who should be the population targets for public affairs education programs incorporating television, and how should these be identified?

5. Is a curriculum in public affairs education possible? If so, how can it be developed and by whom?

6. How are national, regional, and local needs and interests to be related to each other in organizing a comprehensive but flexible program of public affairs education that draws on Public Television?

* * * * *

1. How and where does Public Television fit into public affairs education?

Certain distinctions in the meaning of various terms need emphasis at this point in order to discuss clearly the relationship of Public Television to public affairs education:

> Public Television, as the Carnegie Report makes clear, "includes all that is of human interest and importance which is not at the moment appropriate or available for support by advertising and which is not arranged for formal instruction." Public affairs represents, therefore, only one of the areas of interest and importance to which Public Television may turn its attention.

Public affairs broadcasts refer to those programs covering or dealing with events of interest to the public. Not all public affairs broadcasts are necessarily appropriate vehicles for public affairs education. Some broadcasts portray developments that occur so swiftly they cannot be anticipated or adequately placed in an educational framework at that time. One of the great advantages of television is its contemporaneity - its ability to cover events while they are still happening. In this way the consciousness of the individual is extended and a much greater part of the world becomes his daily environment. Since public affairs broadcasts that spring from contemporary happenings cannot be easily incorporated into a structured educational experience, they fall outside the scope of this paper.

Public affairs education refers to a structured educational experience. It may or may not include broadcasts by any of the mass media. When institutions or agencies engaged in public affairs education do make systematic use of the offerings of Public Television, the broadcasts should be usually related to the various components of the total educational experience in as meaningful a way as possible.

The following section considers the differences between an educational experience for adults and the viewing of television as a discrete experience. Although the colleges and universities and national agencies such as FPA may plan public affairs programs that incorporate television

broadcasts, they cannot control all the circumstances in which adults may use or gain from the broadcasts. Thus, the same broadcast, even though planned as part of a total experience, may serve these - and probably many other - different purposes:

> It may help the already well-informed person to keep up with developments in a particular part of the world, such as Africa, or in an area of activity, such as conservation.
>
> It may stimulate interest on the part of the casual viewer who has not previously been more than vaguely aware of the topic.
>
> It may form an essential part of the set of materials by which an individual develops a framework for thinking about and reacting to subsequent events.

The interests of Public Television and the educational institutions and non-profit agencies concerned with public affairs education will converge, then, on those telecasts made available by Public Television in the public affairs field. For these offerings to be genuinely useful in public affairs education, advance knowledge of the subject of the broadcasts is required so that content may be selected and organized in a manner that enables the broadcast to fill a unique role along with other materials in the total educational plan and, of course, to engage the attention and interest of the persons to whom it is addressed. These desired consequences will not happen automatically. The silence of the Carnegie Report on this issue suggests that the development and planning of public affairs broadcasts is viewed as a separate task, unrelated to the organization of public affairs education programs. The implied answer of the Carnegie Report to the question, "Where does Public Television fit into a program of public affairs education?" is, then, that it doesn't - except in unpredictable and unplanned ways. The unpalatable choice to the educator is whether, on the one hand, to seek to fit

into an educational experience broadcasts that may be magnificent but from an educational point of view may be unfocused or irrelevent, or, on the other hand, to ignore these broadcasts because of the many problems of relating them to other materials in moving toward the achievement of educational goals.

2. Where do public affairs broadcasts fit into public affairs education?

The Carnegie Report attempts to distinguish clearly between Public Television and instructional television. By the latter term, the Commission means "television directed at students in the classroom or elsewhere in the general context of formal education."

The Commission asserts that Public Television is educational television, but it does not consider how television broadcasts not directed at those persons involved in the processes of formal education relate to anything other than the viewer. That relationship has not been conceptualized nor adequately considered in the Report. Consider these brave and highly stimulating words:

> "The great power of television is...that it continues to educate us long after we have left the classroom. It replenishes our store of information, stimulates our perceptions, challenges our standards, and affects our judgment. In the sum of what it presents, it is profoundly educative as life itself is educative and perhaps all the more so because there is no formal syllabus to which we can refer so that we may see what we have learned."

One cannot quarrel with this statement. It is unquestionably true that adults do learn by absorbing new experiences and relating them to an existing store of knowledge, perceptions and attitudes. While agreeing

with the Commission that "education is not always somber or laborious" and "includes gaiety as well as hard intellectual endeavor," it appears that the Commission has concentrated on one form of educational activity to the exclusion of all others. To accept the truth of what the Commission has written about educational activity does not mean that it has formulated the whole truth. It is the remainder of the truth - that which is missing from the Report - that concerns us here. The Report is the whole truth only if one accepts the assertion that the only means of linking television broadcasts to educational activity is the process suggested by "instructional television" as defined by the Commission. Again, what speaks loudly by its silence is the absence of consideration for the problem of linkage in Public Television; this is a topic considered in a subsequent section.

How, then, might Public Television offerings fit into a structured educational experience that is something other than "instructional television?" Let me cite two examples.

The American Broadcasting Company recently carried a four-hour special documentary on Africa, supported by advertising revenues from Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing. The special will be repeated in four hour-long sequences, each of which will be available thereafter in film form for various purposes. ABC and the 3 M's could have made a contribution of enormous importance to public affairs education for adults by linking, through good advance planning, this superlative documentary to a range of educational activities for adults. The results need not have been dull or laborious.

By proper advance planning, the television documentary could have been linked to work books developed along the lines of programmed learning, to discussion groups, and to special seminars on African life and the challenges that that continent poses to U.S. foreign policy. While ABC prepared considerable advance publicity, there appeared to be no advance planning to link the documentary to systematic public affairs education for adults. The result was an enormous expenditure of money for which the educational consequences, while they may be considerable, are not determinable and probably quickly dissipated.

A second and more encouraging example is the commissioning by the Foreign Policy Association of the development of an intriguing and absorbing practice in simulation or game-playing. The raw ingredients of this game, which requires six teams of four or five players each are a series of military and political decisions by rival powers in a small country. While this game was prepared for formal classroom situations, it can also be played by adult study groups and adapted to television. WGBH-TV in Boston is currently pioneering a television version of this game in which all viewers are regarded as influential leaders of the country of their choice. Their advice is solicited by the studio team and received via telephone.

Another possible variation would be to have five teams make their moves in a television studio and actually broadcast while the sixth team might consist of groups in the viewing audience. There could be as many "sixth" teams as desired. The audience-teams could be supplied with materials in advance and their decisions on next steps could be communicated by telephone, computer or runner to the teams in the studio. Such interaction between studio and au-

dience could increase the number of persons watching the broadcast and, of course, heighten its educational significance for them.

One senses that Public Television, perhaps unconsciously, is taking as its model the ABC documentary rather than struggling with the painful process of innovation. It is the Report's locked-in response to existing patterns - despite its stirring words - that disquiets the adult educator, discourages the innovator, and saddens all who hope that the specialized services of an advanced technological society can somehow learn to function together.

What is the nature of the learning experience? Is it so mystical a process that to be interesting it has to be completely unstructured or, if structured, so dull that it fails to capture adult participation? Regardless of the ingredients (the different materials used to construct the experience), the learning process - formal or informal - still involves, for adults as well as for children, the following:

Setting goals

Recognizing the individual differences of the learners

Selecting the means (materials and experiences) - broadcasts, printed works, self-study, discussion, and any others

Organizing the learning experience in sequential, digestible bites.

If there be dullness, it is not inherent in the process but rather in the way the process is conceived and managed. The experiences of the learner - whether viewing a broadcast, reading a book, touring a city neighborhood, visiting the Guggenheim Museum, observing a city council, eyewitnessing a riot - must be conceptualized by someone or it is impossible to speculate what educational change, if any, has taken place.

A trip through "Small, Small World" in Disneyland may be, for example, a pleasant and educational experience, but what kind of education takes place and where does it fit into some conceptual framework?

Much public affairs education suffers from the lack of focus and specificity. It is often chaotic and unplanned in an educational sense. The spending, ultimately, of perhaps as much as 200 million dollars annually on Public Television - a large portion of which might go to public affairs broadcasts - will not by itself change that situation.

3. What linkage among Public Television, educational institutions and agencies engaged in public affairs education is desirable?

In discussing the first issue in this paper, the focus was on the area of overlap between Public Television and public affairs education generally. The second issue raised questions about the nature of the learning process as it makes use of public affairs broadcasts in the informal continuing education of adults about public affairs. The thrust of the discussion of issue number three is toward the problem of linkage. More specifically, how can the activities and resources of Public Television, the universities and colleges and other formal educational institutions, and the non-profit agencies engaged in one or more areas of public affairs education be related to each other?

The problem of linkage is first a conceptual challenge and second an organizational task; important considerations flow from each aspect. The conceptual task of relating television broadcasts, printed materials, and such educational experiences and means as discussion groups and lectures to each other raises practical questions, among which are the following:

1. Whose point of view will prevail, if any does, throughout all the various materials? In programming the computer, the critical point is: Who asks the questions? In the field of public affairs education, the same point becomes: Who determines the framework of information, perceptions and values within which any matter of widespread public interest will be examined? The suggestion here is that the framework be hammered out in joint sessions of those controlling the individual parts of which the total program will be composed - the broadcasts, the written materials, the determination of audience and the selection of qualified resource people to appear on or contribute to each part of the combined operation. If this process still results in broadcasts or other materials that are incomplete or biased, the local television station and the educational institution accepting responsibility for the program in any area still have veto power over the actual use of the materials. The principle at stake is that the selection or definition of issues, particularly national ones, around which to build educational activities should not be the responsibility of Public Television, universities and colleges, or national agencies alone. It should be a joint decision in which all participate.

2. How can sources of information and knowledge be systematically tapped in the development of educational activities? The proponents of Public Television are no more clear than are most other educational impressarios regarding the sources of knowledge on which they will draw and the process for doing so. Presumably Public Television would follow the same process currently followed by most television stations in developing or authenticating programs. This varies widely from station to station and, in this day of computer technology, can only be described as medieval and anachronistic.

What is proposed here is the establishment of a national talent bank (with, perhaps, regional counterparts) in which the names, background of training and experience and information about special competencies of individuals are systematically stored. One is impressed with the extent to which authenticating an account or interpretation of a public issue has become equated with securing the approval or support of a relatively small number of persons in the academic community or public life. With a virtual explosion of issues requiring public understanding and action, it should be possible to improve on the process of enlisting the sources of knowledge in preparing television broadcasts, background statements, work books, games, discussion guides, and other items in the educational battery.

Some of the considerations that spring from the organizational task of creating linkage are these:

1. Can any sustained relationship be developed among Public Television, the formal educational institutions, and national or regional agencies engaged in public affairs education? One is impressed with the few instances of such cooperation at the present time. The Great Decisions Program of the Foreign Policy Association stands out as one of the few examples of successful and sustained cooperation. Several years ago, NET worked closely with a group of universities banded together in the University Council on Education for Public Responsibility in a national effort to direct public attention to the issues boiling out of the urban cauldron. A number of national agencies - notably the National Council of Churches - joined in this effort. Why did it not persist? Conversely, why do the universities, newspapers, television and radio stations, libraries, and many local agencies cooperate year after year in the Great Decisions Program? Apart from all other circumstances, the time and effort given each year by the Foreign Policy Association seem to be chiefly responsible. Clearly some mechanism that fixes responsibility for ensuring that the potential partners in an educational enterprise actually come together is needed if organizational cooperation is to be more than an occasional flash.

2. From whence should the initiative come for suggesting programs, or encouraging cooperation? The answer to this seems almost self-evident; it can come from any of the partners in the activity. No kind of agency or facility is likely to have a monopoly on good ideas.. The organizational task is to ensure that good ideas

will have a chance to go somewhere. Encouragement of initiative and provision for regular conferences on program planning should be incorporated into any national effort to strengthen public affairs education and an adequate organizational base established.

4. Who are the population targets?

In the broadcasting industry, one question constantly arises to haunt station manager, producer, and sponsor alike: Is anyone listening? The significance attached to audience size is well attested by the number of rating services systematically attempting to measure the number of viewers for various radio and television programs. These ratings largely determine the development and selection of programs broadcast via the commercial stations.

While audience size always will and should be a factor in selecting programs whenever a medium as expensive as television is used, size of the audiences will not be the only guide for Public Television. Diversity and quality will be equally important. The Corporation for Public Television and those agencies interested in public affairs education might well join in asking two other questions: First, "Who's listening?" and then, "Does it make any difference?"

There is some evidence to answer the first question. It is known that the higher the level of formal education completed, the more likely it is that individuals will tune in to educational channels. A significantly higher percentage of adults in the over-65 bracket than for any other age are interested in public affairs and also watch television broadcasts.

Among viewers of commercially aired broadcasts, the audience for news is larger than for most other types of programs carried.

Since Public Television will seek to serve a variety of audiences, both diversity and quality of program offerings will loom large in any evaluation of its efforts. As additional research resources are directed to the study of television audiences, the body of knowledge about the audiences for different programs carried by Public Television will grow. The importance of additional research in this area should be called to the attention of the new Central ERIC (Educational Research Information Center), established in the U.S.Office of Education in Washington, D.C., and to the ERIC Clearinghouse in Adult Education established at Syracuse University.

The more difficult question for both Public Television and public affairs education to answer is: "Does it make any difference?" While it is possible on a short range basis - providing goals have been clearly formulated - to adapt standard approaches to the measurement of changes in attitude, understanding, information and values resulting from exposure to specific television programs, what we now know about the problem of retention - or persistence - suggests that this approach to evaluation has very limited value, partly because so many other factors also influence attitudes, values, etc.

While educators and broadcasting stations should be encouraged to collect whatever evidence they can about the impact of their efforts, the more fruitful line of investigation, as suggested above, is to examine the process followed in developing the program.

However, general principles established in the study of learning and attitude change can be presumed to apply to television exposure; educational programs utilizing broadcasts can be evaluated in terms of those principles. In that kind of evaluation, both Public Television and public affairs education can join forces. Some questions to ask in this type of evaluation are the following:

1. Have the educational goals of the combined program been carefully stated?
2. Have the differential roles of the several media or materials involved been determined - i.e., carefully defined?
3. Has the population target been carefully identified? What procedures have been selected for reaching the desired audience with promotional materials and other means?
4. Have the persons responsible for different aspects of the total program of public affairs education worked together to define goals, determine means, and develop a common image of the program to guide their separate efforts? Have provisions been made for continuing communication among them?
5. Have the television broadcasts been adequately produced from the television standpoint?
6. Have other materials been selected or produced in a manner that ensures their effective articulation in the total program?
7. Has a total budget for the program been established and does it distribute available funds fairly among the different elements of the total program?

5. Is a curriculum for public affairs education possible?

Concern for a systematic organization of offerings occupies the interest of leaders in the fields of both public affairs education and educational television. Thoughtful leaders of ETV have struggled with this problem from the earliest days of broadcasting; i.e., they have sought to ask themselves, "What are the needs and interests of American adults that any comprehensive approach to television programming should identify, and how can this awareness be translated into effective programming procedures for television?" The problem remains although carefully thought out program philosophies do underlie many of the practices of the leading educational TV stations of the country today. The problem persists because it is a complex and stubborn combination of theoretical issues, lack of practical information about the needs and interests of adults, and severe shortages of money, personnel, and equipment. Hopefully, the Corporation for Public Television will, in a few years, eliminate many of these roadblocks, but the construction of a curriculum is still a baffling task at the present time.

The problem of bringing some kind of conceptual order into public affairs broadcasts is, at the same time, a part of the task of organizing a curriculum for ETV and of organizing a curriculum of public affairs education. Both Public Television and public affairs educators seek to identify major issues or areas of public interest. Is it not possible to devise means for them to work together in the initial stages of their preparations in the hope that their activities will be mutually reinforcing thereafter?

To be more specific: Are there not long-range issues or areas of concern that will persist for a decade or more and about which enlightened public opinion in the United States is essential if the nation is to take any kind of effective action? For example, in the field of foreign affairs, relations with the underdeveloped part of the world will be a continuing area of concern for the rest of this century. Population control is already a worldwide concern and will remain so. So, too, is the pollution of the atmosphere of the earth by the continued testing of nuclear weapons. In the United States, the problems of the nation's cities are not likely to be solved in the next decade. The ghetto is most certainly not going to disappear in a few years and may not disappear at all unless there is awareness and widespread understanding of the complex of psychological, social and economic factors that contributed to the explosions this past summer in Newark and Detroit. Conservation of air, water, soil, timber and other natural resources has become front page news. New national organizations have sprung up seeking to educate the people and to mobilize them for action. The problem of crime will not yield to stricter police measures alone and will certainly loom large in any text of public concern for a long time.

If it is possible to identify six to ten major areas of concern, how can we strengthen present programs of public education about them? Here one notes the emergence of special purpose organizations, committed to educating the American people in areas of vital interest. Almost all such special purpose organizations suffer from shortage of funds, from

competition for the time and interest of the public at the same time, and have only limited - or none at all - access to such vital means of communication as the radio, television and the newspapers. When special purpose agencies do have access to television broadcasting facilities, the programs are often poorly planned from the standpoint of education, poorly produced from the standpoint of television, and have little or no impact. These harsh words are not meant to indict anyone nor to discourage special purpose organizations from attempting to get vital issues before the American people but rather to underline the importance of professional planning and production.

The "traditional" and somewhat amateur response that characterizes the broadcast and other activities of many agencies in public affairs is not adequate for the present need. Working together, could not the directors of Public Television and public affairs education construct a curriculum based on the eight or ten most urgent and long-lasting issues? The educational agencies of the nation might then move people through a public affairs curriculum in a manner that invites concentration of attention on an issue, that uses available resources most wisely, and draws systematically on sources of knowledge and special kinds of aids.

The Great Decisions Program developed by the Foreign Policy Association is a possible model, although limited to international affairs. However, one hopes that all groups, organizations and instrumentalities at the national, regional and local levels currently involved in the Great Decisions Program will develop lines of communication and cooperation with

instrumentalities involved in other areas of concern (conservation, urban government, etc.) for such purposes as better scheduling, publicity, use of shared facilities, etc. This is not often done at the present time. Many organizations having valuable and significant programs in various areas of national concern and interest are unaware of each other's existence. There is no mechanism for bringing them in touch with each other. We conceal this confusion and lack of any systematic cooperation under the name of "competition in the marketplace." Has the time not come to replace competitive chaos with at least some mechanism for communication and cooperation?

6. National, Regional and Local Interests

The Carnegie Report provides some interesting guidelines for the allocation of resources in the broadcasting field; these guidelines seem applicable also to public affairs education. The Report first suggests the careful separation of national from regional or local efforts and, second, it calls for local option - for each ETV station to choose from a variety of programs originating nationally, regionally and locally those it believes will best serve the interests of its viewers.

These concepts might be applied to public affairs education. More specifically, there appears to be a need to concentrate the development of materials, courses of study, etc. in one or more national agencies whose objectivity and competence are beyond question. Assistance should also be extended to educational institutions and non-profit organizations at the state and local level in the production of effective educational

experiences in those areas. The Twin Cities Town Hall program, based in Minneapolis but serving communities in portions of five states (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and North and South Dakota) provides a useful example of a regional production center for public affairs education.

The nation has had sufficient experience with "package programs," such as those developed by the Fund for Adult Education a decade ago, to know that the production and distribution of these programs is not in itself an adequate response to the needs of the country for public affairs education. While many educational materials can be mass produced at low cost, their successful use in local programs is another matter. Furthermore, many institutions that organize educational activity for adults require materials that must be tailored to special target populations, regional or local issues, and conditions that exist at one time but not another.

There are probably thousands of educational institutions and agencies that conduct some kind of public affairs education. Of these, there must be well over one thousand whose programs are of sufficient size, scope, and status to justify efforts to develop communication and cooperation among them. Their common interests and the needs of the country might well be served by going considerably beyond the development of materials that can be mass produced and attempting the systematic collection and storage, for easy access, of motion picture footage, magazine articles, reports, speeches, magnetic tapes, and descriptions of public affairs programs of different agencies. Furthermore, the producers of

these raw materials - which could be stored or catalogued in regional libraries - should be in communication with those who use them so that production of materials respond to local identification of need. In addition to serving as a circulation system for finished or raw educational materials, a real communication network could provide many additional kinds of help, including workshops in developing educational programs, knowledge of resources people or consultants, advice in promoting programs, use of research findings, and other services.

While some communication about these needs and interests does take place at the present time, the demands of the present day suggest a major and systematized expansion of efforts along that line. In such an effort, of course, national and regional or local needs must be balanced in a comprehensive program that reflects changing conditions. Has the time come to try to create a base for communication and cooperation?

ERIC Clearinghouse
APR 18 1968
on Adult Education